Fertility of Land

†*195. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that fertility of land in the country is decreasing day by day;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering to take any steps to control this trend; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) No, Sir. The foodgrains production in the country is steadily increasing to show that in general there is no decline in the soil fertility. The foodgrain production was 203.61 million tonnes during 1998-99, which had increased to 208.81 million tonnes during 1999-2000. However, the decline in the foodgrain production during 2000-01 is attributed to drought-like situation in many States. The production during the current year is expected to be 210 million tonnes.

There are, however, instances of declining in soil health are productivity due to inadequate and imbalanced use of fertilizers in certain areas of the country. To ensure that there is no ill-effect of any kind due to excessive and imbalanced use of fertilizers, the Government propagates the use of integrated nutrients combining chemical fertilizers, organic manures and biofertilizers on the basis of soil tests.

The Government has taken following important steps to encourage the balanced and integrated use of plant nutrients for sustaining soil fertility:— .

(i) The soil-testing programme is periodically strengthened to make the fertilizers use recommendations according to the nutrient status of the soils.

(ii) Financial support is given to decontrolled phosphatic and potassic fertilizers so as to increase their consumption and thereby bring balance in NPK consumption.

(iii) Use of integrated nutrients through chemical fertilizers including micronutrients, organic sources like biofertilizers, compost/ vermicompost is being encouraged so as to maintain soil fertility and make cheaper source of plant nutrients available to the crops.

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†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.